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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

The Evolution of Current Command Relationships in Amphibious Operations Doctrine

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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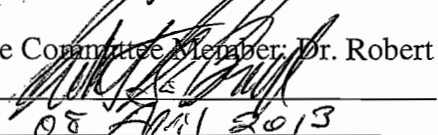
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Executive Summary

Title: The Evolution of Current Command Relationships in Amphibious Operations Doctrine

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Thesis: Constant evaluation of doctrine is required to ensure the Marine Corps is properly prepared for the next conflict. The Marine Corps has a history of such evaluation and shows flexibility to adapt doctrine, even during conflict as lessons learned provided by combat operations identify revision is required. This raises the question as to whether the Marine Corps has adapted doctrine to account for any lessons learned in the last decade of conflict.

Discussion: I propose to study the command relationships in amphibious operations doctrine, and how these relationships evolved to those relationships extant today. I will assess whether current doctrine accurately reflects lessons learned in any recent conflicts and base any recommendations on current operational requirements and Joint doctrine.

Proposed Research Question: Does current amphibious doctrine correctly address the most advantageous command relationships to ensure mission accomplishment?

Conclusion: Current Joint doctrine for amphibious operations does provide a high level of flexibility to achieve unity of effort under a single command while allowing the appropriate component to exercise control, relegating other components to supporting relationships. The supported and supporting framework this relationship is predicated upon, however, opens the door for interpretation and should be revised to the firm CATF/CLF relationship in use until 2001 when JP 3-02 was published.

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Preface

My objective in writing this paper is to contribute to the intellectual rigor that has been done on the topic of amphibious operations by following the evolution of amphibious doctrine while focusing on the aspect of command relationships. I became greatly interested in the subject while composing my Joint Campaign Analysis paper on Operation WATCHTOWER and discovering a nearly neglected development in the area of command relationships. This caused me to wonder how we have addressed the topic, both before and since, and whether we are still conducting the required critical evaluation to remain relevant as the character of war changes.

INTRODUCTION

“The amphibious landing is the most powerful tool we have and to employ it properly we must strike hard and deep...I am firmly convinced that early and strong effort behind the enemy’s front will sever his main lines of communication and enable us to deliver a decisive and crushing blow.”

-General of the Army Douglas MacArthur
23 July 1950 and 23 August 1950

Evolution of Command Relationships in Amphibious Operations

Marines have earned a reputation as premier practitioners of amphibious warfare. While many other military services have forgone the pursuit of amphibious excellence due to the inherent difficulties of an operation as complex and risky, the Marine Corps has not only made it a pillar of its expeditionary nature, but has excelled in execution thereof. Such excellence does not just suddenly appear; it takes much study, testing, evaluating, and revising. Practitioners need to constantly evaluate the teachings they employ, always with an eye open to innovation. Every exercise and every operation needs to contribute lessons learned to continue the refinement of doctrine and tactics, techniques, and procedures. The Marine Corps has been doing just that type of introspective analysis for its entire existence, and although the Corps has performed many roles throughout its existence, since General Lejeune decided the Marine Corps’ mission should be to be the nation’s amphibious operations force, amphibious doctrine has been a primary focus for the Corps and continuously developed since.

One critical aspect of any operation is determination of command responsibilities and command relationships. As doctrine has evolved, so too has the nature of the command relationships evolved to better effect mission accomplishment. This study will analyze the development of amphibious doctrine from World War I forward to the present and will focus on the concurrent evolution of command relationships in that doctrine. It is important to understand

how the current doctrine was reached so one can then evaluate if it remains relevant as written or needs to be revised to fit the current operating environment as the services become more “joint” in execution.

BACKGROUND

“If it had not been for the constant urging of the Marine Corps, the amphibious art would hardly have been developed at all.”

—Admiral W. H. P. Blandy
U.S. Navy (Retired)
1951

Amphibious warfare integrates virtually all types of ships, aircraft, weapons, and landing forces in a concerted military effort against a hostile shore.

- LFM 01

Evolution of Amphibious Operations Doctrine: Post World War I, renewed interest

In the interwar years between World War I and World War II, the Marine Corps struggled to define its role. One main concern for the Corps was to distinguish itself from the Army, which periodically argued that it should assume the tasks assigned to the Marine Corps, thus streamlining the U.S. ground forces.¹ Service in-fighting over diminished post-war resources contributed to the argument that the U. S. could save money by eliminating this redundancy. Such alarming developments led then-Commandant, Lieutenant General John A. Lejeune, to determine that in order to distinguish itself from the Army, the Marine Corps “ought to be the organization to take and hold advanced naval bases in any future naval campaign.”² To this end, he redirected the efforts of his planning staff, and eventually that of Marine Corps Schools, to the task of creating doctrine for amphibious operations. Over the 15 years from 1920 to 1935, Marine planners covered every difficult facet of amphibious operations, including planning for amphibious landings in the face of opposition. This was a significant development as planners from Japan and Britain, the two other significant naval powers, had abandoned

doctrine for opposed landings, as, following the disastrous British assault of Gallipoli in 1915, amphibious landings against opposition were deemed impossible in light of modern weaponry.³

Japanese planners had, in fact, developed doctrine for potential landings into opposition, but infighting between the Imperial Navy and Army led the Imperial Army to seek a reduction in the role of the Imperial Navy. Thus, the Japanese doctrine evolved into one in which success would be achieved by conducting landings into unopposed areas, vice contested landings where they would be reliant on the Navy for transport, air coverage, naval gunfire, and anti-submarine protection.⁴

British officers faced many issues in developing amphibious doctrine, not the least of which was the dramatic anti-war sentiment which existed throughout the post World War I British Empire. They pressed on, however, despite extremely limited funding and inability to test their doctrine, and spent much time analyzing their failure in the Gallipoli campaign. This research developed several lessons learned. First, no amphibious assault should be conducted in daylight nor should one be conducted into opposition, as modern weaponry so dramatically favored the defender's ability to repulse an attacker. Second, doctrine called for as much surprise as possible. Last, the British considered naval gunfire was of limited use in an amphibious landing.⁵

The Marine Corps, on the other hand, derived several drastically different lessons from their study of recent amphibious campaigns. The Marine Corps studied both the Gallipoli campaign and the German campaigns in the Baltic in 1917 and made several important conclusions. These included an appreciation of high volumes of accurate, close-in naval gunfire in reducing shore-based defenses; a requirement for "detailed, coordinated, and flexible planning to include the provision of combat loading, for rapid landing and the buildup of land-

based artillery and supplies following the initial assault; the necessity for speed and deployment on a broad front in the initial ship-to-shore assault; the importance of choosing favorable beaches, destroying defenses in the immediate landing area, and neutralizing enemy positions in the rear and on the flanks which might oppose the landing; the need for a technique for coordinating naval bombardment in close support of land attacks; the need for a naval air arm to support landing operations; and, finally, the need for vigor and resourcefulness in all phases of the operation to exploit the inherent mobility of seapower.”⁶

The Tentative Manual for Landing Operations

Despite all the effort being invested into studying amphibious operations, due to continuous operational commitments, the attempt to codify that research into doctrine stalled numerous times until, in 1933, Brigadier General James Breckenridge, commander of Marine Corps Schools, received direction from the Commandant to halt regular training and have the schools focus on completing the doctrine as “expeditiously as possible.”⁷ This study, though primarily developed by the Marine Corps, was also concurrently assessed and critiqued by Navy planners and Naval War College students. From 1931 to 1934, the Marine Corps focused on writing what would become the *Tentative Manual for Landing Operations*. Although writers such as Arthur Millett, General Holland M. Smith, General Alexander. A. Vandergrift, and others tout the *Tentative Manual* as the embodiment of the complete guidance for conducting amphibious operations, it was still somewhat limited in several areas.

First, as a naval service document written for the Fleet Marine Force, it assumes the landing force is a Marine division. Therefore, as Lieutenant General H. M. Smith explains, the writers assumed that “Since the Fleet Marine Force was an organic part of the Navy, there was

no problem of unified command.”⁸ Indeed, the only mention of command relationships is in the comment that the “attack force commander will usually be the senior naval commander of the units of the fleet comprising the attack.”⁹ The assumption that there would be no issues regarding command authorities would prove to be flawed when put into practical application. Also problematic would be if the landing force was a joint force including Army units, as the Army was reluctant to relinquish control to a Navy officer.

This introduces a second failing of the *Tentative Manual* in that it focused purely on tactical concerns. There was no content coverage for operational or strategic planning or concerns and, therefore, it also had no specific joint content, assuming a purely naval service operation. This lack of consideration for joint operations and the focus on the “tactics and technique of the landing operation and the necessary supporting measures therefor” leads some scholars to consider the *Tentative Manual* as but one of several works which allowed for successful amphibious operations.¹⁰ Indeed, in his dissertation on the subject, William Atwater makes the compelling argument that the *Joint Action of the Army and the Navy* is as important a document to the successful execution of amphibious operations in World War II as was the *Tentative Manual*.

Despite these criticisms, there is no doubt that the *Tentative Manual* was both comprehensive in defining the tactical requirements for amphibious operations and was timely in its publication and dissemination. So complete was the doctrine that the Navy and the Army both republished the *Tentative Manual*, after renaming, as their service doctrine as well.¹¹ Further, as the authors and practitioners of amphibious doctrine, the Marine Corps received the responsibility to provide cadres of Marines to the Army to provide training in amphibious operations.

Joint Action of the Army and the Navy, 1935

Although the Marines are given the credit for codifying amphibious doctrine in the *Tentative Manual*, the *Joint Action of the Army and the Navy* should share the credit for enabling successful operations in World War II. Written in several iterations from 1922 to 1935 by the Joint Board of the Army and the Navy, *Joint Action* cannot claim to discuss any of the tactical “how tos.” It can claim, however, to have kept alive the awareness of some of the operational difficulties of amphibious operations and to have, over the course of its several iterations, served to resolve many of the inter-service disputes before hostilities commenced and joint action was necessary.

Joint Action describes the situations in which joint Army-Navy action is required as either (1) joint overseas expeditions or (2) coastal frontier defense.¹² It is immediately apparent, therefore, that amphibious operations planning should consider the possibility of Army involvement. Joint overseas expeditions, as defined in *Joint Action*, may involve: securing a beachhead, seizing/securing an area for military operations, or seizing a forward naval base.¹³ The reality is that after many years of infighting during the production of *Joint Action*, the Army abrogated their responsibility to coauthor the document and allowed the Navy to determine the majority of the content. After 1930, the Army simply reviewed Navy change requests and made their recommendations on them.

A major problem with *Joint Action* was the issue of command relationships. Whereas the *Tentative Manual* accepted Naval control of the amphibious operation, the Army was less willing to agree to automatically acting subordinate to the Navy. Thus, the initial iterations of the publication identified two possible methods for coordination in joint operations: paramount interest and unity of command. Paramount interest was a concept whereby the service with the

preponderance of the forces in the area or the preponderance of responsibility would have overall command. The normal method to be employed was paramount interest, because neither service wished to relinquish control. The services recognized, however, that there would likely be instances in which the lack of clear control would not work and thus the authors made a provision for it in the unity of command option. So reluctant were the services to give up control to the other that the publication clearly defined the three instances in which to exercise unity of command. Unity of command would only be used when: (1) ordered by the President, (2) ordered by a joint agreement by the service chiefs, or (3) when the on-scene commanders from each service agree that the situation requires it.¹⁴

Testing the Doctrine in Exercises

While writing the *Tentative Manual* and the *Joint Action*, planners also tested the concepts in classroom and sand table exercises. Annual field exercises, designed to simulate real-world scenarios, were also conducted to apply and test the doctrine. The exercises evolved in comprehensiveness and complexity, including Navy and Marine forces initially, but then eventually involving Army forces as well. The inclusion of Army units soon highlighted several areas which required attention before such joint operations were conducted in combat situations.

Besides tactical concerns such as coordination of joint actions and loading party proficiencies and responsibilities, command relationships stood out as a major issue. Marine Brigadier General Eli Cole, in his after action report for a joint amphibious exercise conducted to give the services training in working together, reported that “paramount interest divided responsibility in such a way that it could not work in a landing operation.”¹⁵ The next joint exercise was specifically intended to offer an alternative to the paramount interest philosophy.

Held in Hawaii, the exercise tested the cooperative method of command. The exercise of cooperative command was resoundingly unsuccessful as the Army and Navy commanders bickered over a host of issues. Thus, through the 1927 iteration Joint Action specified paramount interest and unity of command as the means by which forces would exercise command and control.¹⁶

In one of the later exercises, Field Landing Exercise 4, FLEX 4 held on March 2-3, 1938, a significant development regarding command relationships occurred. Once the landing force had established itself ashore, command shifted to the Landing Force Commander. Although the Attack Force Commander, who doctrine stipulated retained control, may have been simply making a kind gesture to the Army General commanding the 2nd Provisional Brigade, the hand-off was successful. This success was recorded in the Navy's official after action report as "a viable alternative to the current doctrine of having the admiral or commodore of the naval force exercise control over the shore operations as well as the naval activities."¹⁷ This development opened the door for later discussions on command relationships which would be called into question in the crucible of combat.

At this time, a revision of *Joint Action* was introduced to reflect a new command relationship. Change Number 2, in June 1938, saw command relationships defined as either "mutual cooperation" or "unity of command." It is difficult to conceive as to how the authors could have believed "mutual cooperation" would be a successful method of control. All of the exercises to this point had highlighted the fact that unless specifically relegated to one service, the on-scene commanders would have difficulty accepting control from the other service. As Rear Admiral Montgomery M. Taylor wrote with skepticism on the topic, "the success of the operation will largely depend on the personality of the two commanders, in their ability to sink

their own desire for preeminence toward the successful accomplishment of a joint task, and on their understanding of the general principles governing the operations of the other service.”¹⁸

This is the doctrine that was in print at the beginning of World War II. It was immediately apparent to operators the difficulties of “mutual cooperation” would not be easily overcome, so “unity of command rapidly became adopted in every theater of the war.”¹⁹

TESTING THE DOCTRINE IN COMBAT

“We were as well trained and as well armed as time and our peacetime experience allowed us to be. We needed combat to tell us how effective our training, our doctrines, and our weapons had been.

We tested them against the enemy, and we found that they worked.”

LtGen A. A. Vandergrift on Guadalcanal

Guadalcanal

Operation WATCHTOWER was a successful amphibious operation which set the stage for future U.S. amphibious operations in the Pacific, and signaled the shift of momentum from Japan to the US. The success of this major joint operation lies in the fact that testing the doctrine and learning lessons from the campaign set the stage for future successful amphibious operations and that success was achieved at the tactical and operational level despite infighting at the service and strategic policy levels. Institutionalization of the services’ roles and codification of the Marine Corps’ new amphibious doctrine stemmed from the lessons learned and would evolve into the joint doctrine used today.

Operation WATCHTOWER, fought from 7 August 1942, until February 1943 to wrest Guadalcanal from Japanese control and to halt Japanese movement into the Solomons, was intended to protect lines of communication to U.S. allies in Australia and New Zealand. WATCHTOWER was the first amphibious offensive against the Japanese and was noteworthy in both its duration and the morale implications for both sides stemming from an American victory. The operation signaled the American resurgence against the Japanese; Japanese expansion was stopped and henceforth from Guadalcanal, the Japanese were on the strategic defensive.

The American success was achieved by a joint force, with each branch bringing its own specific capabilities to the fight. The Navy secured, at least periodically, a sea zone using both sea and air power and provided amphibious lift and logistics support, the Marines executed an amphibious assault to secure the beachhead for follow-on Army units, and the Army arrived in strength to finish the Japanese defenders off. Still, to argue it as a successful joint operation by today's standards and understanding of "jointness," to include interoperability and interdependence, would be a stretch of the imagination. The services squabbled at high levels for regional and campaign command and control, while tactical integration of joint units on the ground and in the air was, conversely, tremendously successful. The Navy-Marine relationship, however, had some flaws regarding command relationships which the Guadalcanal campaign identified and offered a resolution. The true victory was in achieving success despite the infighting occurring in Washington and on regional command staffs throughout the Pacific theater leading up to and in the early stages of the war.

When planning for the initiation of a strategic counteroffensive against Japan began, service rivalry was prevalent, threatening the cooperative agreement so necessary in the resource starved early days of the Pacific campaign when the nation was operating under the "Europe

first” policy. The Navy, under Admiral Ernest King as Commander in Chief U.S. Fleet (COMINCH) and Admiral Chester Nimitz as CINCPAC, with the Marine Corps’ contributions to amphibious doctrine and to War Plan Orange, argued for a three-phased campaign against Japan. The campaign would begin with operations in the Southwest Pacific in order to gain a foothold for a gradual progression of “island hopping” which would culminate in the taking of Japanese strategic possessions throughout the Pacific and, potentially, a final assault on the Japanese homeland. Since this was amphibious in nature, the Navy argued the Navy should be in charge.

Conversely, Army General Douglas MacArthur, as commander of Southwest Pacific Area, supported by General George Marshall, the Army Chief of Staff, first argued for a strong attack against Rabaul, the Japanese stronghold in the Southwestern Pacific. When that proposal was soundly defeated, the Army countered with an island hopping plan similar to the Navy’s, but with the Army in charge, citing the fact that MacArthur was already responsible for that geographic region.

The impasse between the service chiefs continued for some time with a high degree of contentiousness. Finally, General Marshall worked out a compromise wherein the Navy would be in charge of the initial assault and the Army would take over thereafter. With the issue finally settled, the Navy quickly implemented the first phase of operations.

Guadalcanal was the first step in that campaign, and on 7 August 1942, the Marines conducted a successful amphibious assault on Guadalcanal and its neighbors of Gavutu, Florida Island, and Tanambogo. Soon after landing, but before more than half of the unloading had been completed, the naval Fleet, including the Carrier Task Force and the Amphibious Task Force and all other screening forces, withdrew from the immediate vicinity of Guadalcanal. Much has been

made of this early departure on 9 August, claiming a failure on the Navy's part and an abandonment of the Marines.

The unfortunate decision by Admiral Frank Fletcher to withdraw the carrier screen early, coupled with the disastrous defeat suffered by the screening task forces on the evening of 8-9 August during the Battle of Savo Island, forced Admiral Richmond Turner's Amphibious Task Force to leave early as well.²⁰ This withdrawal left the Marines ashore critically short-handed, without vital supplies, equipment, and personnel ashore. Critics call Fletcher's withdrawal a cowardly act and the Marines ashore certainly had little good to say about their Navy brethren's hasty departure. But when viewed through the strategic and operational lens, the decision might have been correct, if potentially hasty.

First, many in the traditionally battleship-centric Navy were slowly recognizing the carrier fleet as a strategic asset. Recent losses in the Pacific theater had reduced the U.S. carrier strength to dangerous levels. Loss of Admiral Fletcher's carriers would have reduced by 2/3 the U.S. carrier strength, effectively forfeiting the possibility of achieving airspace control.²¹ The strategic implications would have been horrific and, although the concept of the carrier's dominance vs. the battleship was still to be widely accepted, Fletcher should not be faulted for recognizing that strategic importance and protecting his carrier force accordingly.

Support for Fletcher's withdrawal comes from an observer with particular interest in the subject. USMC Colonel Melvin Maas, a member of Fletcher's staff, argued in support of the decision, even as his sympathies as a Marine were with those stranded on Guadalcanal. He recognized the operational, and even strategic, implications when he stated, "Extra (Marine) losses are a *localized* operation. This is balanced against a potential *National* tragedy. Loss of

our fleet or one or more of these carriers is a real, worldwide tragedy.”²² Maas took the same overarching long-term view as Fletcher, and came up with the same conclusion.

Strategists agreed that air combat capability was a requirement for any action against the Japanese. As General MacArthur pointed out, no amphibious operation “should be initiated unless there was positive assurance of adequate air cover and continuous air support.”²³

Throughout the campaign, the Navy struggled to achieve temporary airspace control. Without this control, subsequent landings, resupply and even continued possession of U.S. gains would not have been possible. Had the carrier force taken the risk and stayed, it might have been trapped and sunk, and thus have rendered the Navy unable to operate in the Pacific theater for the foreseeable future. Of course, their departure violated the premise of mandatory air support, but only temporarily and locally. The continued survival of those carriers meant future support remained possible.

Admiral Turner, the Amphibious Task Force commander, had little choice but to depart on 9 August, in light of the loss of his air coverage. The carrier task force departure, combined with the thrashing of his screening forces in the previous night’s Battle of Savo Island, left him little recourse but to withdraw temporarily. Again, in a tactical sense, the withdrawal seemed like cowardice, but operationally, it made sense, allowing for continued support from the amphibious task force’s vessels in the rest of the campaign and in the theater as a whole. From the Marine perspective, every extra ferry that came ashore, however, was critical and thus the Marines continued to argue for the departure to be delayed as much as possible.

Critics of the Navy would do well to remember that there were seven major naval battles fought, and far more Navy lives lost, in and for the waters around Guadalcanal. This is a clear representation of the difficulty faced by the Navy in establishing local sea control and speaks to

the dedication and tenacity of the Navy that they kept coming back to support the troops ashore. Further, their actions to protect the carriers were doctrinally sound, but the circumstances created by the departure were unavoidable without exposing the carrier task force to further risk.

Still, the withdrawal by the carrier and amphibious task forces, though only temporary, caused serious operational implications and led to a level of force parity with Japanese defenders that cost the Marines lives and prolonged the fight for the island. Eventually the Navy returned, with the vital resupply, with reinforcements, and with squadrons which based themselves at Henderson Field. The resentment of the initial “abandonment” was hard to overcome, however.

Therefore, in order to prevent purely Naval-service oriented considerations from dramatically impacting ground (Marine) operations, the Marines sought parity in command relations. General Alexander Vandergrift took the opportunity of a meeting with COMSoPac, (Admiral William Halsey), Admiral Turner and the Marine Commandant, (LtGen Thomas Holcomb), to propose that the Commander of the Landing Force ashore should have equality with the Amphibious Task Force Commander. The experiences on Guadalcanal showed that the operational commander ashore needed to be the one making the call. Too often, the Navy was myopic in their concentration on the naval contest, to the point of ignoring the Marine requirements for success ashore. To the Navy’s credit, all the Admirals asked for a recommendation on the subject, Admirals Turner, Halsey, Spruance, Nimitz and King, are said to have fully endorsed this initiative, which would in effect constrain the tactical and operational primacy which the Navy enjoyed until then.²⁴

As a result of this meeting, the request, endorsed by all present, was eventually presented by the Commandant to Admiral Nimitz and finally to Admiral King. The latter approved it and codified the equality of the landing force commander and amphibious force commander for the

remainder of the war. The final letter published to the fleet by COMSoPac, “provided that, after the conclusion of the landing phase of an operation during which Marine units from the Amphibious Force command landed, a task organization for the shore phase of the operation would be established, or the Marine Corps units would revert to Corps command.” It also established “the Corps Commander on the same echelon of command as the Commander Amphibious Force.”²⁵ This represented a significant step toward the recent joint doctrine of command relationships for amphibious operations: the passing of command between the Commander Amphibious Task Force (CATF) and the Commander Landing Force (CLF). As such, a monumental development in joint interoperability is seemingly overlooked by a majority of Guadalcanal chroniclers. From the standpoint of joint operations, this might well be the most significant development of the whole campaign.

Ignoring the command relationships development, Guadalcanal authors focus solely on the development of the tactical situation and the impacts of events on this campaign. The one mention of the command relationship development in a book on Guadalcanal was a passing reference in a USMC historical journal. Collaboration took the form of a letter from Major General Vandergrift, writing to Brigadier General Arch Howard of 1st Marine Division asking “to be told, either in a personal memo or an official one... the command status of Cactus forces... a dispatch was gotten up which general Holcomb assured me had been or would be sent, which put the Corps on a parallel footing with Amphibious Forces, and which recommended that immediately upon cessation of landing operations that the ground and air troops connected therewith pass from control of Amphibious Forces to control of Corps...”²⁶ Another letter, this one from LtGen Holcomb to LtGen Vandergrift, discussed the meeting and its outcome. In it, Holcomb wrote, “The dispatch from COMSoPac about command relations... reached Nimitz a

day before we did. He talked it over with me and said he fully agreed, but as Spruance is such a dear friend of Turner, he would hold a conference before formal approval. We held it, and he sent it on. King approved.”²⁷ This decision established parity for the commander ashore and set a precedent for command relationships for future amphibious operations and for adaptation of doctrine when combat had shown a flaw.

Army forces finally arrived on 13 October and immediately integrated into Vandergrift’s operations. Two months later, on 9 December, the Army officially took over ground operations. Belying the antagonism seen in the service headquarters in Washington, on the ground the two services worked well together. The reports of the Marines’ reaction to the fighting capabilities and spirit of the Americal Division are highly complementary, and there are no reports of issues with integration. In fact, in fighting on the evening of the 24th of October, soldiers of the 164th Infantry, reinforcements for LtCol Lewis Puller’s defense of the airfield were injected “a squad at a time to feed into the lines.” This seamless integration saved the day and the camaraderie between the two units was such that the Marines told the newly arrived soldiers that “they were proud to serve” with them.²⁸

Further contravening fears of contentious joint operations due to service/command relationships, once the decision for Guadalcanal was made and the command dilemma sorted out, General MacArthur freely made his resources available to Operation WATCHTOWER. In Australia, he and his staff assisted on initial planning and provided intelligence and assets where possible. During the campaign, when Admiral Turner proposed a plan for Army units to be sent to Ndemi while fighting still continued to be deadlocked on Guadalcanal, MacArthur was one of those who supported Vandergrift’s position and swayed the vote in favor of reinforcing Guadalcanal first.²⁹

In the end, Operation WATCHTOWER succeeded in its operational goals, and the combatants, though from different services, were able to achieve a cooperative fighting spirit. Much of what was done here was innovative, the battlefield being the proving ground for concepts devised in Quantico schools and war gamed in exercises. As General Vandergrift later wrote, “We needed combat to tell us how effective our training, our doctrine, and our weapons had been.”³⁰ Combat also tested how the services would work together. Although the origins of the campaign seem inauspicious indeed, with service chief infighting and the misconstrued withdrawal of the Naval forces so soon after landing, the campaign as a whole was a model of cooperation. The Army was unstinting in providing all available support they could to WATCHTOWER and the Navy, though demonized early on, fought tenaciously to wrest control of the waters while also struggling to resupply the ground forces so they could be successful as well. Save for Fletcher’s early withdrawal, there are no major instances described in which the operational commanders did not do whatever they could to assist each other.

Further, awareness of the opportunities for improvements led to recurring calls for after action reports. Many of these focused on the tactical requirements, such as the need for armored Amtracks and for flamethrowers and grenade launchers, but some lessons learned dealt with inter-service operations; what would be called joint today. These lessons learned were acted upon immediately and yielded results which had impacts surpassing even the duration of the war. The development of parity in command relationships for the landing force commander is the most significant of those lessons learned and was a direct antecedent of today’s critical command delineation of the CATF-CLF handover.

Amphibious Operations post Guadalcanal

The command relationship adopted at Guadalcanal continued throughout rest of World War II, and, indeed, up to 2001. Even when the landing force was Army, however, the relationship established at Guadalcanal was “carried out with minor modifications, throughout the Pacific phase of World War II.”³¹ Indeed, Atwater reports that at the same time as the Navy implemented lessons learned from Guadalcanal and changed command relationships in the Pacific, Admiral King ordered the same command changes to occur in the European/African theater.³² The command relationships appear seamless on the European front, with the only difficulties being reported in the Western Task Force where General George Patton initially clashed with the Navy, but eventually resolved the issue.³³ For the WWII actions involving an amphibious assault, there were many more lessons learned throughout the rest of both the Pacific and European/African campaigns, but most related to tactical implementation or the need for a new capability; the new command relationship devised at Guadalcanal was unanimously accepted and was viewed as the correct exercise of command. Thus the doctrine remained virtually unchanged until JP 3-02 revised command relationships in 2001.

Numerous amphibious operations have been conducted since WWII. As the nature of threats has changed, with the rise and fall of the Soviet Union and the ensuing Cold War, there has been an increase in the range of operations expected of an amphibious force. These responsibilities now range “from military engagement, security cooperation, and deterrence activities to crisis response and limited contingency operations, and if necessary, major operations and campaigns.”³⁴ Subsequently, there has been a shift in the CATF/CLF relationship intended to meet today’s more multi-faceted requirements.

Current Amphibious Doctrine

JP3-02

The current Joint Publication 3-02, *Amphibious Operations* from 2009, implements some of the lessons learned in the realm of command relationships for amphibious operations since World War I. The first dictate is to follow the tenets of JP -1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, which stipulates Unity of Command as the only possible command relationship.³⁵ No longer is there ambiguity allowed or infighting under “mutual cooperation.” The past decade of operating in a joint environment was facilitated by this concept. The levels of cooperation that exist are now firmly cemented in the minds of those in uniform today and the caustic service in-fighting for command, so prevalent in the past, will stay there.

The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, written in part to preclude joint operational miscues, drove the services to improve joint relationships and interoperability. In light of these imperatives, the Navy and Marine Corps recognized the need to update the doctrine to account for command relationships in joint amphibious operations. A revision of amphibious doctrine, published in 1989 as *Joint Doctrine for Landing Force Operations* JCS Publication 3-01.1 (TEST) was finalized and approved as *Joint Publication for Amphibious Operations* JP 3-02 in 1992. These publications reinforced the command relationships from November of 1942. These familiar relationships were soon to be replaced, however, after having stood for nearly sixty years.

The next revision, published in 2001 as Joint Publication 3-02 *Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations*, restated new operational command relationships in light of the likelihood of amphibious operations being “joint” in service participation. As Lieutenant Colonel Russell Jones asserts in his master’s thesis on the subject, “Unity of effort, the cornerstone of

amphibious operations, no longer translates to unity of command by a naval commander.”³⁶

Instead, the Joint Force Commander will exercise command responsibilities as he sees fit for the operation.

The CLF/CATF relationships, firm and distinct with clearly defined handover points before the 2001 version of JP 3-02, are now just recommended “roles.” The CATF/CLF change-over will still likely occur, however, and the ever important command shifts will still be expected to take place. Both the 2001 version of JP 3-02 and the latest (2009) revision outline possible command hand-overs, which would be familiar to practitioners since Guadalcanal. (Appendix 1)

The greatest difference in the new doctrine is the stress on the use of supported/supporting command relationships to maintain the aforementioned expansion of amphibious roles and responsibilities. There remains the opportunity to utilize an operational control (OPCON) or tactical control (TACON) relationship, as determined by the joint force commander.

This change reflects an unfortunate step backwards in the evolution of doctrine. Admittedly, it allows for flexibility to meet a range of military operations which continues to expand, while ensuring emphasis on the important unity of command requirement for success in the chaos of battle. However, there is now room for subjectivity, which the ironclad, well-defined CATF/CLF relationship in existence before 2001 precluded.

Conclusion

This portends a world dominated by complex urban littorals, where competition exists for vital resources at the same time a youthful population becomes increasingly disenfranchised.

-Amphibious Operations in the 21st Century

The Navy and the Marine Corps have evolved over the last century, growing in size, capabilities and responsibilities. Their focus on ensuring the doctrine that guides them has continued to keep pace with these dramatic changes and is effectively poised to deliver pertinent guidance for the next conflict.

The Marine Corps publication, *Amphibious Operations in the 21st Century*, highlights several key facts which will bear on future conflicts: the world's population growth will continue to tax available resources; the world's populations are concentrated in the littoral regions and this trend will increase; that more than 60% of the world's population will live in urban areas by 2025.³⁷ These factors combine to create the prime ingredients for conflict in which the U.S. will need amphibious forces for the most effective response.

Indeed, *Amphibious Operations* claims that "in the past twenty years, U.S. amphibious forces have responded to crises (at) least one hundred and four times."³⁸ Such facts are alarming, further highlighting the fact that flexible doctrine is necessary so warfighters can respond appropriately, with the minimum of friction, to any crisis with the greatest speed possible. The latest amphibious doctrine allows just that flexibility and expands the control relationships to include provisions allowing seamless joint operations as well.

This study indicates that the doctrine, as written, identifies a wide range of command relationships ostensibly designed to afford the Joint Force Commander the flexibility to implement whichever relationship best fits the situation. It also remains consistent with the hard-learned lesson that unity of command can be the only relationship exercised in combat. One is concerned, however, that the retreat from the well-defined CATF/CLF relationship opens the possibility of another Guadalcanal. Imagine a situation in which the Expeditionary Task Force, having landed the Landing Force ashore, now faces persistent Anti Access/Area Denial threats

posed by a near peer naval opponent, such as a China or an Iran. The new flexibility might allow the CATF to justify a departure from the coastal waters to protect the fleet, leaving large gaps in the Landing Force's relied-upon support. All of the FLEXs showed that the concept of "mutual cooperation," which the current doctrine approximates, was incompatible with conducting a successful amphibious operation. And when tried in combat, the requirement for defined points at which command transferred was immediately highlighted; the Navy and Marine Corps must ensure they are not setting themselves up to relearn those lessons which experience has already shown the answer to.

The Navy and the Marine Corps will have to reevaluate these latest changes in doctrine to ensure it correctly aligns with emerging circumstances without disregarding the lessons of the past. Let us hope this happens before the next amphibious assault, rather than as a lesson learned after it.

Appendix 1

EXAMPLES OF SHIFTS IN THE SUPPORT RELATIONSHIP*

MISSION

Assault
Raid with coastal threat
Inland Raid with no coastal threat
Demonstration
Withdrawal
Humanitarian Assistance

SUPPORTED COMMANDER

CATF, then CLF
CATF, then CLF, then CATF
CLF
CATF
CLF, then CATF
CATF or CLF

CATF Commander, Amphibious Task Force
CLF Commander, Landing Force

*Actual supported-supporting commanders will be designated by the establishing authority based on the specific mission requirements.

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